## THE THEOLOGICAL BASIS OF THE GUILD OF HEALTH AND ST RAPHAEL

The Christian healing ministry is concerned with well-being in the fullest sense. We therefore expect to find common ground, and often to make common cause with many other approaches to healing and wholeness. At the same time, the Christian healing ministry has its own, distinctive, understandings and practices which the Guild of Health is privileged to embrace, explore, and exemplify in its ethos and activities; as well as commend to other practitioners in this field. There are six key perspectives which need to inform a Christian 'take' on healing:

We believe that God's healing activity is,

1. Cosmic in scope
2. Relational in nature
3. Personal in focus
4. Incarnational in expression
5. Transcendent in range
6. Transformational in intent

1. Cosmic in scope

The first chapter of Genesis pictures God brooding over the formless void and drawing the cosmos into being. We understand the healing ministry to be part of the cosmic process through which God labours to bring coherence out of chaos. Ecology and the care of creation are part of our vision for the redemption / making whole of the universe.

**Healing is sharing in God's own care for all creation.**

2. Relational in nature

The Christian 'picture' of God is not of a solitary being, but of a mysterious community of 'persons' united in love and will. As we are drawn into the life of God so we are caught up into the shared life of the deity. Loving relationships, at every level, are key to God's mode of operation and healing: relationships between human beings and God; between human beings (justice, peace, politics and community life); between human beings and the animate and inanimate creatures with whom we share the earth; and between the different aspects of our own being – however we choose to name them (e.g., body, mind, and spirit; conscious and unconscious, etc.).

**Healing is about finding our place within the Divine Community.**

3. Personal in focus

As Christians, we find the supreme expression of the life and character of God in the person of Jesus, the Christ. God is, for us, not an impersonal force or energy, but 'personal' – however far God transcends our present understanding of personhood. More than this, following Paul, we cherish the vision of humankind being so caught up into the life of God that we become 'one body' with Christ, in a way which transcends all our present distinctions – Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female (Galatians 3.28).

**Healing explores the personal character of God.**

4. Incarnational in expression

Believing that Jesus shares our life is the most powerful way imaginable of claiming that the material world is good, and that God cares about everything which inhibits, distorts, or threatens to destroy the life of his creation. Jesus' healing activity demonstrates the radically new life which begins to appear when the Kingly rule of God erupts in our everyday world. Nothing is too small for God's attention. Health and healing depend on our being re-fashioned in God's image and likeness.

**Healing is finding our rightful place within the harmony / peace / shalom of God's kingdom.**

5. Transcendent in range

At the heart of the Christian faith lie the death and resurrection of Jesus. In a way which we cannot, yet, comprehend, the Easter story holds together the depths of human tragedy with the possibility of renewed life which transcends and breaks the cradle of mortality, time and space, which presently contains us. The Christian healing ministry is about learning to stand, faithfully, in the aching gulf between Good Friday and the dawn of Easter Sunday morning.

**Healing finds its hope in Easter faith.**

6. Transformational in intent

In Jesus' miracles we see God's Kingdom becoming a present reality – the end times erupting in the present. When we pray for healing, we expect to see some imminent improvement. At the same time we recognise – and coming to this recognition may be part of our healing – that we are mortals who need to be content to live within our human limitations, trusting God for the fulfilment which only God can bring.

**Healing is about God's activity in a finite world.**

## THE GUILD OF HEALTH AND OTHER APPROACHES TO HEALING

The Guild of Health has always sought to find common ground with medical professionals. Science is about deepening our understanding of the natural processes which prevail in God's world and, where necessary, finding ways to repair or enhance them. We gladly support this cause. At the same time, we know that human beings do not live by bread alone. Health is more than excellent physical or psychological functioning. We need to find meaning in life, and this comes, in the Christian understanding, from discovering what it means to be animated by the Holy Spirit of God, so that we become aware of our deepest identities as the sons or daughters of God.

At the same time, we live in an era when, for a variety of reasons, there is widespread mistrust of science: scientists have sometimes appeared to limit 'reality' to what can be counted, or tested; and scientific knowledge can be terribly abused. Concurrently, for many reasons - not least the apparent success of science - traditional Christian understandings have lost their hold on many of our contemporaries' hearts and imaginations. Now, because nature abhors a

vacuum, a whole market place of faiths and alternative therapies has sprung up, attempting to supply our need for meaning and healing. In time, science will catch up with many of these therapies and help us understand how and why they work – or do not work.

Most difficult, from the Christian point of view though, are non-physical approaches to healing which claim to channel light, or love. We can well understand that most people would feel better, at least in the short term, from being given an hour of another human being's time, in which they are encouraged to relax in a comfortable setting and experience the 'healer's' gentle, kind, attention. It is what we all need! and maybe a welcome contrast to some rather busy, wordy, and dogmatic Christian interventions. At the same time, many of those who practise healing in this way do so in the belief that they have spirit guides who help them to channel power; and those who benefit from their ministrations will naturally be drawn towards the beliefs which underpin them.

As a Christian organisation, the Guild of Health takes its stand on orthodox Christian foundations. At the same time, we don't always have to know whether other people are right or wrong; with Gamaliel we may sometimes need to say, "keep away from these men and let them alone; because if this plan or this undertaking is of human origin, it will fail; but if it is of God you will not be able to overthrow them – in that case you may even be found to be fighting against God!" (Acts 5.38f). The key thing, for us, is not what we are against, but Who we are for.

Guild President Rt Rev John Pritchard
Guild Chaplain Rev Chris Mackenna
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